

The Office of the Ministry the best Office.

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PREACHED AT THE
INSTALLATION

OF THE REVEREND

DAVID AVERY,

T O T H E

MINISTERIAL OFFICE

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W R E N T H A M,

MAY 25, 1786.

BY *NATHANAEL EMMONS, A. M.* *
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN.

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T I M O T H Y I. xii.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

MANY of those favoured persons, whom Christ has employed as signal instruments of promoting his wise and gracious designs, have been raised up and qualified for his service, in a manner very unexpected both to themselves, and to the world. The Lord Jesus raised up Joseph, Moses, and David; and prepared them for the noble and important parts, which they had to act upon the stage of life, by a series of surprising and mysterious causes and events. But the most remarkable instance of this nature, that we find in all the sacred pages, is the great Apostle

Paul.

Paul. Christ, by a miracle of grace, took him out of the kingdom and service of Satan, and employed him in promoting and defending that glorious cause, which, just before, he had been labouring with all his might to overthrow and destroy. And this wise and gracious conduct of Christ so deeply affected his heart, that he could never speak of it without the warmest gratitude, and the highest expressions of admiration and praise. "By the grace of God I am what I am. Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." This text, without any comment, plainly implies, that those, whom Christ furnishes for the Ministry, are thankful for their office.

WE shall therefore first show, that Christ furnishes men for the Ministry; and then suggest several reasons, why those, whom Christ furnishes for the Ministry, are thankful for their office.

IT belongs to Christ, as the Governour of the world, and as the Head of the Church, to raise up and qualify men for the service of the sanctuary.

This

This Paul, more than intimates in the words of the text. And every where in the New-Testament, Ministers are represented as the servants and ambassadors of Christ, and as his peculiar, ascension gifts to the Church. Christ is said to give not only Apostles, and Prophets, and Evangelists, but also Pastors and Teachers for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the Ministry. Hence we may justly consider Christ as forming and qualifying, as well as authorizing all his own Ministers, in every age of the Church.

THE weakest eye is capable of discerning a great diversity in the characters of men as to their natural powers and abilities. This difference, indeed, sometimes appears almost equal to that, which draws the line of distinction between us and the various tribes of sensitive natures. Solomon, Socrates, and Newton, to name no more, differed as much from some of the lowest of our own species, as one star differs from another star in glory. But all this diversity of intellectual furniture originates from Christ, who endows mankind with various abilities, according to the various services, in which he designs to employ them. Some men he means to employ in preaching the Gospel, and for that reason, enriches their minds with such distinguish-
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ing qualities, as he knows the importance of their office justly requires. Paul, we are told, was a chosen vessel. Christ always meant to make him a Minister. He raised him up to preach the Gospel among the heathen nations. And accordingly we find, that he endowed him with those superior powers and talents, which were equal to his superior office; and which, in the eye of the Prince of Critics, gave him a rank among the celebrated Orators of Greece and Rome. By this instance of his conduct, Christ has plainly told us, that in his view, there is no station nor employment of life, which requires better natural abilities, than the ministerial office. Nor can we conceive, that any one should need a clear perception, a penetrating judgment, a lively imagination, and all the powers of persuasion, more than a Minister of the Gospel, whose business it is, to understand, to explain, and to enforce the deep things of God, which carry life or death to every hearer. Christ therefore, who always acts with infinite wisdom and propriety in adopting means to ends, bestows a large portion of intellectual furniture upon those, whom he forms for the great and arduous work of preaching the Gospel.

But the noblest powers of nature stand in need of the nurturing hand of Education. The uninstructed

instructed mind resembles the unpolished Diamond,
 before the artificer's hand has given the finishing
 stroke, to display its sparkling beauties. Sensible
 therefore of the happy influence of instruction, to
 strengthen and enlarge, as well as to soften and re-
 fine the opening powers of the mind, Christ has
 taken particular care from age to age, that those,
 whom he designs for great and extensive service in
 his Church and Kingdom, should enjoy the bene-
 fit of a learned education. As he raised up Paul
 to be a pillar of the Church, and a principal instru-
 ment of spreading the Gospel through the world ;
 for in order to furnish him for this great and arduous
 work, he brought him up at the feet of Gamaliel,
 the most noted and learned Rabbi in the Jewish
 nation. And no doubt Paul improved his time
 to the best advantage, and acquired a large stock
 of that human knowledge, which he found to be
 of eminent service afterwards, in preaching the
 Gospel, and opening the great truths of divine Re-
 velation. I know, indeed, Dr. Campbell con-
 jectures, that he derived most of his Learning from
 the Jewish Rabbies, who taught mere fables, tra-
 ditions, and endless genealogies, which could be
 of no great service to a Preacher of the Gospel.
 But, if we only consider, that he was born in the
 famous

famous city of Tarsus*; that there probably he spent his younger years in the study of the Sciences; that he went into Judea merely to finish his education, and gain a more thorough knowledge of the religious sentiments of his own nation; that he was well acquainted with the heathen Poets, and able to quote them with beauty and propriety; and that he disputed the Epicurean and Stoic Philosophers in the city of Athens, which, as the seat of Learning and of learned men, was called the Eye of Greece; I say, if we only consider this, we shall be apt to conclude, that Christ furnished him with large measures of human, as well as divine knowledge, to qualify him to preach the Gospel in every part of the world. But besides Paul, we may mention many others, whom Christ has formed for his more immediate and especial service, by means of a public education. He educated Moses in the court of Pharaoh. He educated Samuel in the house of the Lord in Shiloh. He educated David in the court of Saul. He educated Solomon in the court of David. He educated the Prophets in the Schools of Samuel, of Elijah, and of Elisha, which were at Bethel, Jerico, and Gilgal†. He educated

* See Bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, vol. 2. p. 182.

† See Lewis' Antiquities of the Hebrew Republic.

educated Daniel, Hannahiah, Misael, and Azariah in the Academy in the city of Babylon. And to supply the defect of a learned education in the Apostles and primitive Ministers of the Gospel, he miraculously endowed them not only with the gift of Tongues, but also with the superior gifts of *Knowledge and of Wisdom* †. These instances plainly show, that Christ is a friend to Learning, and that he commonly makes use of it, to qualify those, whom he designs for eminent service in his spiritual kingdom.

BUT, besides all these powers and improvements of nature, he also communicates his own spirit to his Ministers, and makes them like-minded with himself. For this is one of his invariable maxims, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." He views every natural man as a real enemy to his cause and kingdom, and therefore totally unfit to preach the Gospel, until he has experienced a saving change, and become heartily united to his person and interest. Of this, we have a clear and striking instance in the Apostle Paul. Before his conversion, notwithstanding all his shining qualities, and literary improvements, he was a blasphemer,

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phemer,

phemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; and fit to be the minister of Satan only, in whose cause and service, he was most heartily engaged. Christ therefore appeared to him as he was going to Damascus, and struck conviction into his conscience, laid open the plague of his heart, destroyed his false hopes, and raised him from spiritual death to spiritual life. And this divine Change sanctified all his natural and acquired abilities, directed them to their proper use and end, united his heart to the cause of truth, and inspired him with holy zeal and fortitude to spread the triumphs of the Cross in the face of a frowning world. Thus a good capacity, a good education, and a good heart, are the noble qualifications, which Christ bestows upon those, whom he raises up, and employs in the sacred work of the Gospel Ministry.

WE shall now, in the second place, as proposed, suggest several reasons, why the Ministers of Christ are thankful for their office.

First, THE first reason to be given is this; that the ministerial office bears a favourable aspect upon a life of religion and vital piety. The Ministers of Christ hunger and thirst after righteousness, and desire to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

They

They are thankful therefore for that employment, which serves to advance, rather than to obstruct their progress in the christian and divine life. In this respect, we find a difference among the various callings, which divine providence requires various persons to pursue. Some useful and necessary employments seem rather unfavourable to piety and devotion, and throw obstacles in the way of that habitual intercourse and communion with God, which every Christian ardently desires to maintain and improve. The common business of Merchants, of Farmers, of Mechanics, is apt to engross their attention and divert their minds from divine objects, and leave them too little time and inclination for the secret duties of devotion. Some, who go down to the Sea in ships, and others, who jeopard their lives in the high places of the Field, lament the loss of those divine ordinances and numerous aids to piety, which they once enjoyed in the more retired and silent scenes of life. And the pious Physician painfully feels the embarrassments of his calling, which so often robs him of his happiest hours in the Closet and in the Family, as well as in the house of God.

But the Minister of Christ is freed from all these obstructions to piety, by the nature of his office,

office, which gives him time, retirement, and all the means of secret, private, and public devotion. His main work is the proper food of a pious heart, and serves to nourish and strengthen every holy and religious affection. His daily business calls him to retirement, and in that retirement to commune with God and his own heart, to search the Scriptures, and meditate upon the glorious objects of Eternity. His public office leads him to the house of God, and there to take the most active and animating part in the public exercises of religion. His own discourses, which should always flow warm from his own heart, give him an opportunity of deriving the largest portion of spiritual instruction, from every subject, upon which he descants in public. His duty calls him to the houses of mourning, and to the chambers of the sick and of the dying, where all the feelings of benevolence, of compassion and friendship, are naturally awakened and improved. His duty also carries him among lively christians, among mourning saints, and distressed sinners, where the beauties of religion, the worth of souls, and the presence of God, serve to solemnize his mind, and to warm his heart with devout and heavenly affections. Besides all this, the peculiar difficulties,

difficulties, which attend his office, yield him a fair opportunity of improving his mind in some of the most amiable of the christian graces. The difficulties, which he discovers in his studies; the difficulties, which he finds in discoursing with his People, under a great variety of soul-concerns; and the difficulties, which arise from the blindness, the caprice, and the baser passions of human nature, all unite to lead him to God, and to oblige him to live in the continued exercise of faith and hope, of submission and dependence, of humility and meekness. Paul appears to have made great proficiency in the school of affliction, and to have derived much benefit from the heavy trials, which he underwent in the discharge of his office. "He learned in whatever state he was therewith to be content." And therefore he says, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." Hence the Apostles, and the primitive Ministers of Christ, and those of their successors, who have gone through the most fiery trials, have exhibited the most shining characters of practical religion and vital piety.

So

So that the Ministry, both by its duties and its trials, is eminently calculated to improve those who are employed in it, in all the branches of the christian and divine life, and therefore affords them abundant reason to be thankful for their office.

Secondly, The Ministers of Christ are thankful for their office, because it gives them peculiar advantages to enrich their minds with useful and divine knowledge. A thirst for knowledge, especially for the knowledge of God and of divine things, always accompanies a good capacity and a good heart. And as these are qualifications of the Ministers of Christ; so they are thankful for an office, which not only permits, but requires them "to incline their ear to wisdom, to cry after knowledge, and to lift up their voice for understanding; to seek her as silver, and to search for her as for hid treasures." It is the unhappy lot of mankind in general to pursue employments, which confine their whole attention to a very small number of low and sensible objects; and thereby prevent the cultivation and refinement of all their nobler powers and faculties. But the ministerial office gives a free scope to the excursions of the mind, and opens a wide field for intellectual pleasures and improvements. The Divine may walk with

Historians,

Historians, Metaphysicians, and Philosophers as far as they go, and then pass on to regions beyond the circle of their acquaintance. For they confine their researches to the laws and works of nature, which are objects that were born with time, which live with time, and which shall die when time dies. But his business leads him out of time into Eternity, carries him back to endless ages before creation began, and pushes him forward to interminable ages beyond the Judgment day, and requires him to be acquainted not only with the works and laws of nature, but also with the God of nature, and his supreme end in all the works of providence and of grace. A man therefore might be as great a Metaphysician as Locke, as great a Philosopher as Newton, as great a Naturalist as Solomon, and yet in point of the noblest knowledge, fall far below the Apostle Paul, who understood the deep things of divine Revelation, which alone can explain all the works and ways of the supreme Being. As it would be of little service to know all the springs and wheels and motions of a Watch, without knowing the end for which it was made; so it would be of little service to know the whole machinery and construction of the whole material and intellectual System, without know-
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ing the end for which it was created. Hence it is of more importance to know *why* things exist, than *how* they exist; *why* God has established the laws of nature, than *how* they operate; *why* he has made us as we are, than *how* he made us such. There is no study more agreeable and more useful, than the study of *final causes*. And this is the study of the Divine, to whom it properly belongs to discover the chief end of man, to vindicate the ways of God, and to explore the *final cause* of things, from the sacred Oracles of truth. His business therefore requires him to extend his researches to matters of a higher nature, and of more importance, than those which employ the attention of the Sons of Science; and so affords him a happy opportunity of feeding his mind with the same glorious truths, which, Angels now desire to look into, and which, all holy Beings will forever contemplate, with growing ardor and delight. And this is a good reason why he should be thankful for his office. But,

Thirdly, A GREATER reason is, that it opens before him the largest sphere of usefulness. It is the sincere and ardent desire of a pious heart to be useful. The language of Paul, is the language of every real saint, "Lord what wilt thou have me

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to do ?" And the ministerial office appears so adapted to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls, that, perhaps, almost every young Convert, for a while at least, wishes to be a Minister, and thinks that he should be able to convert all the world. So young Melancthon thought till painful experience taught him to the contrary. This, however, is certain, that no other employment of life opens so fair a prospect of doing good, as the work of the Ministry. A Minister has the same opportunities, which other men have to be useful in all the common relations and connections of life. He has still an opportunity peculiar to himself, to do good by the insensible and powerful influence of Example; because his office places him on such an eminence, and is of such a sacred nature, as naturally to draw the eyes and attention of all to his conduct. It belongs to his office, to strengthen the cords of civil Society, by condemning vice, by inculcating virtue, and by enforcing the righteous laws of man, from the Word of God and the motives of Eternity. And it is a part of his duty, to attend to the rising Hopes of his Flock, and instil into their young and tender minds the first principles of virtue and wisdom, which lay the broadest foundation for peace and

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harmony among families, among societies and larger communities. But his widest sphere of usefulness lies in that divine authority with which he is invested, to bear the messages of God to men, and teach them those great and important truths, by which, they may become wise to salvation. By virtue of this authority, Paul became so extensively useful in the first age of Christianity. When Christ appeared to him to put him into office, he addressed him in such serious and animating language as this; "Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified." This was as much as to say, "Go, and be my instrument of converting thousands of immortal souls, who are now perishing for lack of knowledge; that they may be delivered from the power of Satan, and from the dominion of sin, and restored to the favour of God, and set up as the everlasting

verlasting monuments of free and sovereign grace."

All this good, we have reason to believe, that Paul was actually the means of promoting, by fulfilling the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus. Where then shall we find another such instance of extensive usefulness? Joseph, who saved two nations from temporal ruin, was a useful man; Moses, who led the People of God through seas, and swords and plagues to the borders of Canaan, was a useful man; David, who served God and his Generation upon the Throne of Israel, was a useful man; and Solomon, who built, for the honour and service of God, the most grand and elegant Temple that the sun ever beheld, was a useful man; But, I appeal to all who have read the labours of Paul, and the fruits of his ministry, whether he was not the means in the hand of Christ, of diffusing much greater, much nobler, and much more permanent happiness among his fellow-creatures, than Joseph, or Moses, than David, or Solomon, or than any other man before or since. Hence Paul was so thankful for the ministry, and so willing to live and preach the Gospel, even while he longed for heaven, and the immediate presence and enjoyment of Christ. And hence all the Ministers of Christ are thankful for the same office, which opens such

an extensive field for usefulness in promoting the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. Especially when they consider once more,

Fourthly, THAT their work is of such a nature, as to carry its own present and future Reward with it. The Ministers of Christ receive no inconsiderable reward as they go along, before their labours and their lives are ended. They enjoy the pleasure, which there is, in separating themselves from the world, and intermeddling with all wisdom. They enjoy the benefit, which there is, in the effectual and fervent prayers of those, who esteem them highly in love, for their works' sake. They enjoy the satisfaction, which there is, in observing their people growing in knowledge and grace, under their public and private instructions. And they sometimes enjoy that more noble and divine happiness, which results from the success of their labours in the conversion of sinners, of whom they had travelled in birth, till Christ was formed in them. These spiritual children are their reward, while they live and converse with them in this life; they will be their reward, when they meet them in Heaven; they will be their reward, when they meet them at the day of Judgment; and they will be their living and growing reward from that day

day forward forever. Such a prospect as this, supported and animated Paul, under all his labours and sufferings in the vineyard of Christ. Hence he writes thus to those, whom he had begotten through the Gospel, at Corinth. "For we which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in *us*, but life in you.—Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up *us* also by Jesus, and *shall present us with you,—for which cause we faint not.*" To the same persons he says again in this same Epistle, "Ye have acknowledged us in part, that *we* are *your* rejoicing, even as *ye* also are *ours* in the day of the Lord Jesus." He calls the Philippian converts, "His joy and crown." And, in the pleasing language of raised expectation, he asks the Thessalonians, "What is *our* hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even *ye* in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?" How glorious does the Apostle now appear in heaven, surrounded with the living fruits of his labours? And how glorious will he appear at the last day, when Christ shall present him and all his spiritual family to the view of the assembled universe, to be each others joy and crown of rejoicing forever?

forever? We are no where told what shall be the particular reward of Moses, of Samuel, of David, or of any other eminent servants of God; but we know that Paul's reward shall finally consist in the fruits of his labours in the work of the ministry. His work *has* carried, and *will* carry its own reward with it, as long as he and his people shall enjoy the mansions of heaven. Hence he might well say, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." And all the Ministers of Christ have the same reason to be thankful for their office, while they are now reaping, and expecting, hereafter, to reap such a living and growing reward of their labours, in the salvation of Souls.

A few reflections will now conclude the subject.

First, The office of the Ministry, is the most desirable office in the world. "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." There is no office that can be more desirable than this. It is every way suited to gratify all the desires of a pious and devout heart. It carries religion, learning, usefulness, and its own divine and permanent reward with it. And it gives the freest scope to the utmost

most exertions of all the powers and faculties of the soul. The general rebellion of our world, has opened the widest field for the Ambassadors of Christ to employ all their gifts and graces, in beseeching sinners to become reconciled to God. Every Minister of the Gospel has a more important cause to plead, than ever employed the eloquence of Demosthenes, or Cicero. And if he gain his cause, he not only saves a soul from death, and recovers a subject to God, but also conquers the powers of darkness, and fills the world of light with joy. Besides, his works bear the stamp of immortality, and can receive no injury from the blasting power and influence of age. The works of Raphael and of Hogarth, are every day perishing under the mouldering hand of time. The laws and constitutions of Solon, of Lycurgus, of Numa are no more. The works of Homer, of Milton, of Shakespear, are constantly verging towards oblivion. Noah's Ark, which was a hundred and twenty years in building, has, for ages and ages, been dissolved in dust. And Solomon's Temple, the noblest monument of wealth and of art, has long since been raised to its foundations, and thrown into heaps of ruins. But the works of Paul, those living temples, which he raised up, have followed him to Heaven,

Heaven, where they still survive the ruins and ravages of time, and grow in beauty as they grow in age. His office therefore was a good office; his work a good work. And whoever desires this work, desires the best work that ever employed the head or heart, or tongue of man. "He that winneth souls is wise;" and he that desireth the office of winning souls, is wise in the choice of his office.

Secondly, THE ministerial office needs no foreign aid, to recommend itself to those who are qualified for it. Some are ready to apprehend, that the Ministry would soon become *vacant*, if it should once unhappily lose the protection and support of the civil Power. Our learned youth, we are told, are turning their attention to Law, Physic, and Merchandize, and but few, and those too not of the most promising parts, are looking forward to the Ministry. And what, we are asked, will soon become of the sacred office? Who will desire it under so many worldly embarrassments and disadvantages? Our subject replies, Those who desire a *good* work for the sake of a *good* work, and not for the sake of honour, ease, or filthy lucre. The ministerial office will live as long as Religion lives, and will be filled with able and faithful

faithful men, as long as able and faithful men are in the world. The Church has always had the best Pastors, when there were no secular advantages to draw men into the ministry; and the worst spiritual guides, when there were the strongest worldly motives to preach the gospel. Hence there is no ground to fear that the ministerial office will ever suffer by being deprived of worldly appendages. The work of the ministry will always recommend itself to able and faithful men, who will esteem it a privilege to plead the cause of Christ, and promote the salvation of sinners. Why did Paul thank Christ for putting him into the ministry? Did the ministry in his day enjoy the smiles and support of the civil Magistrate? Or did the office open the road to honour, opulence, or ease? Certainly this was not the case. He chose the ministry therefore, because it was a good office in its own nature, independent of all human establishments. He often intimates, indeed, that the world called him a fool for his choice. But he thought it sufficient to reply, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel."

Thirdly, THE ministerial office is no burden to the People. One, who calls himself a moral Philosopher, undertakes to prove in the face of stub-

born fact, that the People of Israel were utterly unable to support their *expensive* Priesthood. And many, at this day, seem to have the same opinion concerning the Ministers of Christ. They look upon the Institution as a burden, and wish to be exempted from maintaining such a numerous set of men, whose support costs them, in their view, much more than they are worth. But if there be any weight in this objection, we presume to say, that it lies not against the office of the ministry, but against those only who unworthily sustain it. The office requires great and good men to fill it, who are endowed with the richest gifts and graces of Christ, and who are able to instruct the People in things, which infinitely concern them as rational and immortal creatures. And though individuals have disgraced their office, yet the Ministers of Christ as a Body, have actually done more to enlighten the minds, to restrain the corruptions, and to cultivate the virtues of mankind, than every other order of men in the world. This, every Christian People are obliged to own, and especially the People in New-England. We have long sustained, and perhaps in some measure, still sustain the character of a *sober, virtuous, and religious People*. But this, under God, must
 be

be chiefly ascribed to the Succession of able and faithful Ministers, who have planted and watered our Churches ; and who have so firmly fixed us in the faith once delivered to the saints, that no Deceivers have been able to eradicate from our minds the first principles of virtue and religion, or to turn us aside from the fundamental Doctrines * of divine Revelation. We, therefore, have no reason to complain of the ministerial Office, from which we have derived, and do still derive such precious and important advantages. But, on the other hand, we have every reason to venerate the divine Institution, to esteem the Ministers of Christ highly in love for their work sake, and to give them a support, which is the best suited to render them the most extensively useful.

Fourthly, THE Ministers of the Gospel ought to give themselves wholly to the duties of their office. Do they love their office ? Are they thankful for their office ? Do they esteem their office a peculiar privilege ? Then surely they ought to exert themselves, with unwearied diligence, in the faithful discharge of all its duties. These are various

* See the Westminster Catechism, which has been generally adopted ; the Massachusetts Confession of Faith ; and the Writings of Hooker, Shepard, Stoddard, Edwards.

rious and important enough to employ all their time and all their abilities. The greatest and best of men have found themselves unequal to the arduous task, and felt themselves ready to sink under the weight of their sacred work. Even Paul was so sensible of the difficulty and importance of ministerial duties, that he cries out, under a deep sense of human weakness and imbecility, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Ministers have no time to spare for amusements, for diversions, or for the peculiar studies of any other Profession than their own. And if they had time, the nature of their office, forbids them to dissipate their minds by the cares, the pleasures, or the pursuits of the world. But some, perhaps, may plead *necessity* for neglecting the duties of their office. This necessity very seldom takes place. Let Ministers therefore consider their solemn vows to Christ, and by a faithful discharge of their office, convince their People, that they are entirely devoted to their service; and then if their complaints be not removed, their consciences will be eased. This however is certainly that course of conduct, which Paul directs Timothy and every other Minister of the Gospel to pursue, "Thou therefore endure hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man

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that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."

Fifthly, The Ministers of the Gospel should cheerfully submit to that state of self-denial, in which, the nature of their office requires them to live. Their peculiar station deprives them of many worldly enjoyments, and naturally subjects them to a life of self-denial. They have no grounds to expect that honour, that ease, that affluence, or that independence, which attends many other employments of life. These alluring prospects they are called to renounce, and cheerfully submit to more humble and self-denying circumstances. To such a state of humility and self-denial, Christ and the Apostles cheerfully subjected themselves, through the whole course of their ministry. Paul, in particular, made great sacrifices to his office, and readily submitted to all the scenes of self-denial, which he knew would attend the preaching of the Gospel. He says, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

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to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen ; *immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*" Flesh and blood would naturally say, " Spare thyself, and plunge not into all the dangers and mortifying circumstances, which overwhelm the despised Preachers of the Cross." But, resisting these solicitations of nature, and yielding to the motions of grace, he resolved to obey the call of Christ, and preach the Gospel, at the hazard of every worldly interest. This was a signal act of self-denial. For, he was a young man of shining talents, and of great expectations ; at least, the great men of the nation had fixed their eyes upon him, and had given him a mark of their particular esteem and regard, by granting him a commission to execute a very important design. But all these flattering prospects he cheerfully gave up, for the sake of the ministry. And when he was called to the trial, he made good his resolutions, and courageously endured the afflictions of the Gospel. The account of his trials and sufferings, is enough to make the first Clergymen in Europe, the Prelates of all established Churches, and all who sustain the ministerial character, ashamed of themselves, whenever they complain of the burdens of their office.—

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“He was in labours abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times he received forty stripes save one. Thrice was he beaten with rods, once was he stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, a night and a day he was in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness, in painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” Yet after all this, in the close of life, he could sincerely say, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” He always maintained such a grateful sense of the distinguishing privilege of being a Minister of the Gospel, that he *felt* as though he could never *do* nor *suffer* enough to promote the cause of Christ and the salvation of sinners. Surely then *we*, who sustain the same office, ought to feel the same spirit, and cheerfully go through all the trials that attend us in the course of our ministry. If we love our office; if we are thankful for it; how readily should we take up the cross, despise the pomp
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and splendor of the world, and silently walk in the low vale of obscurity, neglect, and dependence?

Sixthly, CHRIST has laid his Ministers under the most endearing obligations to be faithful in their office. He has raised them up. He has given them their noble powers and faculties. He has enriched their minds with all their treasures of knowledge and grace. And besides all this, he has put them into the highest and best office in his kingdom. They are bound therefore by their office, by their gifts and graces, and by all the ties of love and gratitude, to preach the Gospel with the utmost plainness and fidelity. Paul felt the weight and influence of all these tender motives, and accordingly chose to be the servant of Christ, rather than the servant of men; and to displease all the world, rather than to displease *him*, who had put him into the ministry. He renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. He walked not in craftiness, nor handled the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. In all his Epistles, but especially in those to the Romans, and Ephesians, he inculcates, without the least palliation or reserve, the doctrine of native depravity, of regeneration, of election,

election, of divine sovereignty, and of divine operation in forming the vessels of mercy and the vessels of wrath. And this faithful discharge of his office, he tells us, gave him peculiar comfort and satisfaction in the nearest views of Eternity. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, *I have kept the faith*. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Now, my Fathers and Brethren, if we are the Ministers of Christ, we shall likewise feel the force of these strong and tender obligations, to be faithful in our office. We shall not seek to please men, but we shall seek to please Christ. We shall tell men the truth, even though they should become our enemies for telling them the truth. We shall plainly lay open the depravity and corruption of the human heart. We shall aim to strip sinners of their self-righteousness, and drive them from all their refuges of lies. We shall endeavour to make our hearers understand and feel the most *disagreeable*, which are indeed the most *important and profitable* doctrines of the Gospel. And we shall labour to lodge in their consciences

as well as in our own, a lasting evidence, that, having declared the whole counsel of God, we are pure from the blood of all men.

Seventbly, It is a privilege to *bear*, as well as to *preach* the Gospel. It was a privilege of the Gentiles to *bear* Paul, as well as a privilege of Paul to *preach* to the Gentiles. And it is a privilege of the People now to *bear* the Ministers of Christ, as well as a privilege of the Ministers of Christ to *preach* to the People. Indeed, the opportunity of hearing the Gospel, is one of the highest privileges that mankind can ever enjoy. What greater privilege can Christ bestow upon any people, than to raise up an able and faithful Minister, and furnish him with his richest gifts and graces, and send him among them, to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? This great and invaluable blessing, my hearers, you all enjoy, who enjoy able and faithful Ministers. How then will you be able to answer it to Christ at the day of Judgment, if you esteem it a *burden* rather than a *privilege*, to hear them preach; and from Sabbath to Sabbath, neglect to appear in the house of God, to seek the law at their mouth? You had better misimprove any other day in the week,

week, than misimprove the Sabbath. You had better misimprove seed time and harvest, than misimprove the precious season of hearing the word of God. You had better absent yourselves from any other place, than from the place of public worship, where God manifests his presence, and displays his pardoning mercy. You had better therefore abuse any other privilege you enjoy, than abuse the privilege of *bearing* the Gospel, for if you abuse this privilege, you will abuse Light, which above all things will enhance your guilt, and aggravate your everlasting ruin. For says Christ himself, "*This is the Condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than Light.*"





